

Plant Press



~Finding Vegetative Solutions for Conservation Problems~

USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service - Golden Meadow Plant Materials Center

PMC Hit Hard but Still Standing

Hurricane season officially runs from June 1-Nov. 30, so it got started fairly early with Cindy (only briefly labeled as a Category 1 Hurricane) which knocked out power at the PMC for two days. Without electricity, greenhouse vents and fans could not run, so we lost a few plants. Damage was minor compared to what came next.

Katrina made landfall early Monday morning August 29. Even though the eye passed to the east, the PMC was without power for nine days. Our three greenhouses are missing roof and wall panels, part of the headhouse's metal roof and its garage door blew off, two shade houses are without shade cloth and with some mangled framework, plants were blown down and around. The conference room/upstairs area took a bad hit and has suffered some wall and roof damage. Unfortunately we lost a large, newly seeded batch of little bluestem for a U.S. Forest Service (USFS) project and hundreds of woody cuttings that our crew had just stuck in flats. However, much remains, and we remain positive in our clean-up. We do have a great amount of research and production left intact. And we are just thankful that things weren't worse. Recently, Rita beat us up a bit again, but nothing like Katrina. We will recover...

ENDURING A SEASON OF HURRICANES

Date	Hurricane Event
July 5.....	Cindy
August 29.....	Katrina
September 23.....	Rita



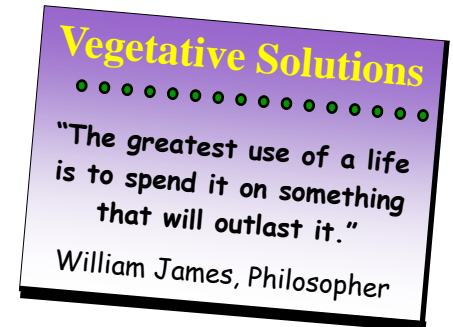
Greenhouse No. 1 with yaupon (*Ilex vomitoria*) in the foreground.

It's Field Evaluation Planting Time

The Golden Meadow PMC is looking for a few good sites. We have many species of woody plants and grasses that we would like to evaluate in the field. If you would like a demonstration in your area contact Scott Edwards, Plant Materials Specialist at 318-473-7761 or at scott.edwards@la.usda.gov. This is a painless procedure for everyone involved. We just need a willing partner or landowner and we do the rest. Thanks in advance for helping us get conservation on the ground.

The Mission of the NRCS Plant Materials Program:

We develop and transfer plant materials and plant technology for the conservation of natural resources. In working with a broad range of plant species, including grasses, forbs, trees, and shrubs, the program seeks to address priority needs of field offices and land managers in both public and private sectors. Emphasis is focused on using native plants as a sustainable way to solve conservation problems and protect ecosystems.



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PMC Forms Unique Partnerships to Restore Local Ecotypes

Clifton Choctaw Tribe

PMC Manager Gary Fine has been working with the Clifton Choctaw tribe which is based in the west central part of Louisiana. The Clifton Choctaw were introduced to the PMC by NRCS State Forester, Dr. Terry Clason and are also assisted by NRCS RC&D Coordinator Benny Dobson. This liaison began for the purpose of researching buttonbush production for eventual marketing as a tribal income commodity.

Buttonbush is becoming a highly sought-after shrub for conservation plantings, especially since it is tolerant of very wet soils. According to *The (NRCS) PLANTS Database*, it "is an obligate wetland shrub suitable for wetland restoration, created wetlands, and riparian zones. It has exceptional wildlife benefits. The seed is eaten by eight species of waterfowl and the twigs by three species of mammals."



Buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*) seedling and acclimated plants.

The tribe's interest in growing plants for income originally started with long leaf pine seedling production as a result of USFS community and rural development contacts in the early 1990s. The first Clifton Choctaw-USFS project constructed a plant nursery which has produced containerized pine seedlings for use by the USFS and in the wholesale conservation plant business. Today this venture provides employment opportunities for nearly every household, not to mention a renewed work ethic and pride in the community.

Work with buttonbush at the PMC has involved looking at various seed sources and types of media and watering regimes as may affect germination and survival rates. A two-day propagation and establishment workshop was held at the PMC in August for technology transfer of information to the Clifton-Choctaw Nursery.

Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana

Conservation of an ancient cultural tradition motivated the Chitimacha Tribe of Louisiana in their request for PMC assistance. They are the oldest recognized and indigenous tribe in Louisiana. They have used river cane (*Arundinaria gigantea*) for woven baskets and mats since the era of the Mississippi mound-building culture, a tradition dating back to the Middle Ages.

Since 2001, the PMC has been working with tribal representatives on propagation, establishment, culture and harvest of river cane (also known as wild cane, giant cane and giant bamboo). The conservation problem in this case is that the Chitimacha's craft is threatened by a shortage of river cane populations. Also, there were no river cane populations actually growing on the reservation, which has shrunk to one-fourth of its established area in the mid-1800s.

The tribe's website (www.chitimacha.com) states that "The Chitimachas dedicated most of their efforts to cultivating the soil, fishing, and developing the domestic arts." They "displayed the greatest skill through the art of weaving baskets" and their "basketry reached such a degree of development that it might be placed among the higher arts." To this day, the income potential from this craft is very lucrative. One intricately designed basket recently sold for \$15,000.

The PMC has succeeded in helping the Chitimacha increase river cane populations; notable especially as these are now on tribal land. A review of the off-Center planting site earlier this season revealed excellent survival of past plantings, with very good performance. This year three more river cane accessions were collected, potted and are being grown out at the PMC. Ongoing work will help take some of the guesswork out of the "where, when, and how to replant them".



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